



The STEWARD

North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation
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Michael F. Easley
 Governor

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William G. Ross Jr.
 Secretary, DENR

WALT GRAVLEY RETIRES

For some in the state parks system, their lasting vision of Walt

Gravley is the one of him briskly scrambling up the rocky Jacob's Fork River and carrying on his back, piece-by-piece, an interminable



**JACKSON TAKES
 REINS IN WEST.
 STORY PAGE 12**

load of lumber to begin building a complex series of bridges and staircases so that visitors could reach the remote splendor of High Shoals Falls.

Short on money and short on help at South Mountains State Park, Graveley cajoled his crew and volunteers into putting all they had into the job by his sheer determination and an almost religious devotion to hard work.

"If anyone got more

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THE RIVER SECTION OF THE PARK INCLUDES ABOUT FOUR MILES OF SHORELINE.

SCUPPERNONG RIVER AREA ADDED TO PETTIGREW

More than 2,500 acres have been acquired to establish a Scuppernong River section of Pettigrew State Park with the help of the state's three conservation trust funds, The Nature Conservancy and the people of Washington and Tyrell counties in northeast North Carolina.

About four miles of

scenic frontage along one of the state's wildest rivers is the centerpiece of a new state parks presence in the area.

"These land acquisitions will raise the profile of Pettigrew State Park, one of our state's oldest parks, and expand its scope," said Lewis Ledford, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation. There will be more opportunities for environmental education and more opportunities for more

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**THIS EDITION OF THE STEWARD SPONSORED BY
 JORDAN LAKE SRA PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Department of Environment and Natural Resources

From The Director's Desk

Traditionally, as the calendar turns onto a new year, it's a time for looking both backward and forward, to consider what's transpired and what's on the horizon.

In some ways, this year is no different for the state parks system, which in its history, has faced many interesting challenges and undertaken its share of daunting new initiatives. But in one respect, perhaps, there is a difference. I can't recall a period when the division attempted to balance so many challenges and opportunities at one time.

Right now, we have four new state parks – Carver's Creek, Haw River, Hickory Nut Gorge and Mayo River – in various stages of development, one of which encompasses our first residential environmental education center at Brown's Summit. We're essentially recreating Lake James State Park, and are adding entirely new dimensions to some parks such as Pettigrew, with the addition of property on the Scuppernong River, and South Mountains, where a recent agreement recently transferred to the park 454 acres that had been maintained as a watershed for the N.C. School of the Deaf. (As part of that agreement, both DENR and DHHS have pledged to protect the land's natural resources and jointly develop an education center, which will be built to strict standards to allow full access for the disabled.)

There are roughly four-dozen capital improvement projects in some phase of design or construction, and dozens more land acquisition opportunities that must be investigated with some urgency. We're reaching for new levels of partnership with old friends such as Audubon, Friends of State Parks, conservation trust funds and land conservancies. And, we are intent on implementing a state-of-the-art reservations system as soon as possible. These are just some of the more pressing issues.

That kind of loaded agenda can sometimes tax our concentration and strain our resources. But at the same time, it opens our minds to new possibilities and spurs creativity. It's certain that we can't succeed without a lot of help from our friends, both in the state parks system and from outside.

At this turn of the calendar, there's a lot to consider when we look back and much to look forward to. Thank you for the great accomplishments of the past year. May each of you enjoy a wonderful holiday season!

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford

UP CLOSE AND 'PERSONNEL'

Sean McElhone was promoted to Park Ranger III at Jones Lake State Park. He has a bachelor's degree in recreation and park management from Pennsylvania State University and previously worked at Hammocks Beach and Mount Mitchell state parks.

William Cox was promoted to a Park Ranger III at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area. He has a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation from Appalachian State University and previously worked at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area and Mount Mitchell State Park.

Jamie Anderson was hired as Park Ranger I at Crowders Mountain State Park. She has a bachelor's degree in biology/chemistry from Gardner-Webb University and previously worked with the division as a seasonal employee and completed an internship at New River State Park.

Aubrie Hurley was promoted to Park Ranger II at Crowders Mountain State Park. She graduated from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro with a bachelor's degree in recreation, parks and tourism management and has previous

work experience with Vermont Youth Conservation Corp. and Roanoke Rapids Aquatic Center.

Craig Steinmetz was promoted to Maintenance Mechanic II at Hammocks Beach State Park. He has a bachelor's degree in social science/biology from Ball State University and more than 31 years of work-related experience with the division at the U.S. Marine Corps.

Christopher Ammon joined the staff at Eno River State Park as Park Ranger II. He has a bachelor's degree in

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NC PARKS GET NATIONAL RECOGNITION

North Carolina's state parks system was one of four finalists for the 2005 Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management presented Oct. 19 by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration.

The Gold Medal Awards are considered the most prestigious in the field of parks and recreation management.

Florida won the bi-annual competition. Other finalists were Missouri and Tennessee.

For the competition, state parks systems were judged on 11 criteria including the quality of long-range planning, the response to changing population and economic trends, the extent of citizen support, the quality of natural resource protection and the types of services to special population groups.

Staff of the Division of Parks and Recreation began compiling information for the award application in January.

Aside from an extensive application, the division was required to submit its five-year systemwide plan – which was to have been updated this year – and a 12-minute video documentary that spotlighted the parks system's programs and services.

Bill Pendergraft of Environmental Media of Beaufort, SC contributed video footage and in-kind services for the project. With his help and the file footage, the video was prepared in about five weeks last spring.



NORTH CAROLINA ONE OF FOUR GOLD MEDAL FINALISTS.

“Being a finalist for the NRPA Gold Medal Award for parks management has brought a lot of national recognition to North Carolina for the successes that our state parks system has enjoyed recently,” said Lewis Ledford, division director. “We’re proud of our parks and the people who manage them. This was an excellent chance for us to demonstrate their dedication and professionalism.”

More than 5,000 people attended the NRPA conference in San Antonio, TX, where the awards were announced. North Carolina was also a finalist for the award in 1997.

UP CLOSE AND ‘PERSONNEL’

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American history/environmental studies from Queens College and previously worked with Florida State Parks.

Barbara Adams was hired at New River State Park as an Office Assistant III. She has an associate's degree in business from Wilkes Community College, more than two years of seasonal employment with the division and previously worked as a bank teller.

Jerry Honeycutt is a new grounds worker at Falls Lake State Recreation Area. He has more than five years of work experience, including

seasonal employment with the division, and previously worked as a plumber.

Karen Johnson was hired as an Office Assistant III at Crowders Mountain State Park. She has a bachelor's degree in social science, a master's degree in international affairs and seven years of work experience in the administrative field.

Ethel Speights has joined the staff at Jones Lake State Park as an Office Assistant III. She is a resident of Fayetteville and has more than seven years of administrative experience.

Fitzhugh McMurry Jr. was hired as Maintenance Mechanic II at Stone Mountain State Park. He is a native of Lawndale and brings with him more than 14 years of related work experience.

Adam Carver joined the staff of Falls Lake State Recreation Area as a Park Ranger II. He holds a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management from Western Carolina University, worked as a seasonal employee at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area and has conducted wildlife research at Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

STATE PARKS PROJECTS WIN APPROVAL

The N.C. Parks and Recreation Authority set aside \$4 million toward land acquisition at Hickory Nut Gorge State Park and \$5.9 million for a coastal environmental education center at Fort Macon State Park at an October meeting at Stone Mountain State Park.

Those were among a long list of projects using anticipated 2005-06 revenues into the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

Traditionally, the authority considers projects of the state parks system during its October quarterly meeting. Sixty-five percent of the trust fund – which is supported by the state's tax on real estate deed transfers – is to be used for state parks land acquisition and capital projects.

The authority also agreed to pledge \$8.6 million in future revenues using 20-year certificates of participation for land acquisition at three new state parks and for capital improvements on newly acquired property at Lake James State Park. The authority to finance projects using the certificates was granted by the General Assembly in 2004.

The funds for Hickory Nut Gorge will be put toward the purchase of the 1,568-acre "World's Edge" property that is being held by The Nature Conservancy and the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy in Rutherford County. The conservation groups bought the land from an estate in August for \$16 million.

The rugged foothills land at the edge of the Piedmont offers important plant and animal habitat and spectacular scenery and shares a border with the private Chimney Rock Park.

The General Assembly, in



PARKS AND RECREATION AUTHORITY MEMBERS WENDELL BEGLEY, EDDIE HOLBROOK, CYNTHIA TART AND RON KINCAID WERE APPOINTED TO NEW THREE-YEAR TERMS AND TOOK THE OATH OF OFFICE AT STONE MOUNTAIN STATE PARK FROM SPARTA TOWN CLERK KAY COX. PICTURED ARE, FROM LEFT, HOLBROOK, TART, AUTHORITY CHAIRMAN JONATHAN HOWES, AND KINCAID. (BEGLEY IS NOT PICTURED.)

its 2005 session, authorized state parks at Hickory Nut Gorge and at Carver's Creek in Cumberland County. The Nature Conservancy has large land holdings at both locations that could be core properties for the new state parks.

The Natural Heritage Trust Fund has approved a \$3.9 million grant for the "World's Edge" property and another grant of \$3.9 million was tentatively approved by the Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

In allocating \$14.2 million in anticipated revenues, the authority also approved 12 other land acquisition projects for the year. They are:

- Bullhead Mountain State Natural Area, \$500,000 for property along a ridgeline to the east.

- Crowders Mountain State Park, \$100,000 for a small tract and house to be used as a park staff residence.

- Eno River State Park, \$600,000 for properties near Cabel Ford that will allow an

improved trail system.

- Hanging Rock State Park, \$500,000 for several tracts on the park's perimeter.

- Lake Waccamaw State Park, \$2 million for a tract that will connect the park to state game lands.

- Lower Haw River State Natural Area, \$1 million for tracts to the north near US 15-501.

- Lumber River State Park, \$200,000 toward the purchase of four properties in the river corridor.

- Morrow Mountain State Park, \$800,000 for tracts on the park's perimeter.

- Mount Jefferson State Natural Area, \$200,000 for tracts on the park's perimeter.

- Mount Mitchell State Park, \$400,000 for two properties along the ridgeline of the Black Mountain Range.

- New River State Park, \$2.8 million toward the purchase of several properties near the park's Wagoner Access.

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PARKS PROJECTS

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-Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area, \$450,000 for property on the mountain's western slope.

Last year's legislation concerning certificates of participation allows the authority to borrow against future trust fund revenues specifically for improvements at Lake James, for new state parks on the Haw and Mayo Rivers and for parks that serve as a buffer to military installations.

The new state park authorized at Carver's Creek Sandhills qualifies under the buffer criteria since land under consideration borders Fort Bragg. The Nature Conservancy currently owns nearly 1,000 acres that is a well-maintained, long leaf pine ecosystem and would likely be the core property for a park.

The authority agreed to seek \$3.6 million in financing for that project, as well as \$1.25 million each for Haw River and Mayo River state parks, and \$2.5 million for capital improvements at Lake James.

Last year, 2,915 acres were added to Lake James in a deal with Crescent Resources Inc., and a new master plan for the



PARKS AND RECREATION AUTHORITY MEMBERS TOOK A BRIEF TOUR OF STONE MOUNTAIN STATE PARK FOLLOWING THEIR OCTOBER MEETING.

park is being prepared.

A costal environmental education center at Fort Macon State Park has for many years been a dream of the Friends of Fort Macon and other supporters of North Carolina's second oldest state park in Carteret County.

Much of the design work has already been done, and a parking area was expanded recently in anticipation of the facility, which will be located near the fort itself.

Aside from \$5.9 million earmarked for this facility, capital

projects approved by the authority include:

- Maintenance improvements to the Brown's Summit Environmental Education Center at Haw River State Park, \$236,500.

- Trail improvements at Stone Mountain State Park, \$110,100.

- A new ranger residence at Morrow Mountain State Park, \$300,000.

- Boat ramp development at the Nutbush recreation site at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area, \$2.06 million.

- Development of interim facilities at Mayo River State Park, \$1.04 million.

- Utility lines at the Chalk Bank Access of Lumber River State Park, \$150,000.

- Master plan development at South Mountains State Park, \$145,000.

For the year, a total \$12.5 million was authorized for capital improvement projects, including that set aside for major maintenance, trail maintenance, demolition and construction reserve.



A LOCAL BEEKEEPER HOLDS A DEMONSTRATION AT STONE MOUNTAIN.

SCUPPERNONG RIVER

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types of recreation.”

Heretofore, Pettigrew has been a relatively small state park in land area – about 1,500 acres on the shore of 16,000-acre Lake Phelps. The new Scuppernong River Section lies about six miles to the northeast of the existing park and is linked by a historic canal to Lake Phelps.

The conservation of the river was celebrated Oct. 27 when The Nature Conservancy officially dedicated 686 acres of land donated to the park. The event was held in Columbia, NC. That town’s waterfront offers a public glimpse of the river’s stunning scenery.

“This is an area where you’re just as apt to run into a black bear or red wolf as another human being,” said Merrill Lynch, assistant director of protection for The Nature Conservancy.

“The Nature Conservancy has worked along the Scuppernong River for about 20 years. Over that time, we’ve gathered individual parcels like the pieces of a puzzle. Thanks to generous grants and donations of land, the puzzle is just about complete. We’re pleased to donate our lands to the Division of Parks and Recreation.”

Over the past 18 months, the parks system purchased three tracts – totaling 1,859 acres – from Weyerhaeuser Corp. Coastal Lumber Co. and a family estate.

For this project, the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund contributed \$600,000; the Clean Water Management Trust Fund granted \$890,000; and \$550,000 came from the Natural Heritage Trust Fund.



AN EVENT CELEBRATING THE ADDITION WAS HELD ON THE RIVER IN COLUMBIA.

During the event in Columbia, Norma Mills, chief of staff for state Sen. Marc Basnight, said that the trust funds are critical to conservation in the state, but they sometimes seem easy targets during budget shortfalls. “But, imagine North Carolina without these types of tracts of land preserved, not only for today but for future generations,” she said.

The Weyerhaeuser tract is the largest and highest in elevation in the swampy terrain and offers the greatest potential for facilities development.

In coming months, the master plan for Pettigrew will be amended to reflect the additional land and its potential uses, which could include camping, canoeing, hiking, interpretive programs, wildlife viewing, fishing and picnicking.

The newly protected areas have impressive credentials as an important natural resource. The 22-mile river has no development upstream from Columbia.

One stand of Atlantic white cedar on the property

offers the largest specimens of the rare tree on the east coast, and a North Carolina champion cedar is located there with a diameter close to three feet.

A number of rare animal species have been documented in the river corridor. They include the red-cockaded woodpecker, the American alligator, the black swamp snake and red wolf re-introduced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The river is also an important nursery area for river herring.

Rare plants include silvery sedge, seven-angled pipewort and perennial sundrop.

The Scuppernong River Section of Pettigrew will significantly expand a corridor of conservation lands, much of it established as part of the federal Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

In the region of the Scuppernong and Alligator rivers, conservation lands under state and federal protection now total about 30,000 acres, all of it acquired within the past 20 years.

JONES LAKE DEDICATES VISITOR CENTER

More than 50 people from the Bladen County area came to Jones Lake State Park Sept. 1 to help the Division of Parks and Recreation celebrate the dedication of a new lakefront recreation complex and 6,273-square-foot visitor center.

The project represents a total investment of \$2.42 million for construction of the visitor center and a new bathhouse, renovation of a 206-foot pier and boathouse and new sidewalks and parking area. The project was funded by the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, which, in turn, is supported by the state's tax on real estate deed transfers. It is the principal funding source for land acquisition and capital improvements in the state parks system.

"Jones Lake has always held a central place in the life of the community in Bladen County, and these improvements will enhance that presence and raise the profile of the state park," said Lewis Ledford, director of the division.

"Alongside the improved recreation facilities will be new opportunities for education about the natural and cultural resources of the bay lakes region."

The Jones Lake project is the latest in a program to equip state parks with modern visitor centers and exhibit halls, begun in the mid-1990s when the trust fund was established.

The 1,000-square-foot exhibit hall offers museum-quality exhibits exploring the richness of the Carolina Bays. Dioramas and interactive, hands-on displays depict the natural communities, flora and fauna of the region. There is also a cultural history section that features historical photos of the park and



TOM ELLIS, A FORMER DIVISION DIRECTOR WHO EARLIER SERVED AS A SUPERINTENDENT AT JONES LAKE, CUTS A RIBBON ON THE NEW VISITOR CENTER WITH HELP FROM MRS. DEWITT POWELL, WIFE OF THE FIRST SUPERINTENDENT.

many of its early visitors.

The visitor center also features a teaching auditorium with extensive audiovisual equipment and separate classroom, restrooms and staff offices. The steel-framed building has a siding and brick veneer exterior.

The new bathhouse replaces a masonry structure that had fallen into disrepair and was demolished in 2003 at the site of the new visitor center. The original wooden bathhouse was opened in 1939 when North Carolina began operating the park.

At 1,720 square feet, the new bathhouse offers a concession area and men's and women's shower facilities with a solar-powered hot water system.

The pier has been renovated with new wood decking, and the boathouse has been outfitted with new decking, cedar siding and a rubber membrane roof.

David Bullard, chairman of the chamber of commerce for

Bladen County and White Lake, told the group at the dedication that the improvements at the park bring pride to the entire community. "I'm taken aback. These are beautiful facilities and I congratulate the staff on what you've done here."

Assisting in a ribbon-cutting were Mrs. Dewitt Powell, wife of the first park superintendent, and Tom Ellis, former division director and also a former park superintendent at Jones Lake. Former division employees attending included Scott Daughtry, William Berry and Leon Carter.

The design team for the project was Richard Collier of McKim & Creed of Wilmington, Mike Saied of Design Elements in Wilmington, engineer David Terkeltoub of Wilmington and Hank Hoomani of PDC Engineers of Raleigh. General contractor was WECC Inc. of Fayetteville.

Glenn Sheppard was the division's construction manager for the year-long project.

CONSERVANCY ADDS TO ELK KNOB SNA

The summit of Elk Knob – the second highest point in Watauga County – offers a commanding view north toward The Peak, the highest mountain in neighboring Ashe County.

The Elk Knob State Natural Area now encompasses both peaks, thanks to recent gifts from The Nature Conservancy of 785 acres in two tracts on The Peak. The additions expand the two-year-old natural area to more than 2,000 acres.

On Oct. 21, The Nature Conservancy celebrated the donation on The Peak, along with the announcement of a conservation easement for an adjoining 566 acres on Long Hope Creek at the foot of The Peak that has belonged to a fishing club since 1936.

Partner organizations represented at a ceremony at the fishing club's lodge included the Division of Parks and Recreation, The Nature Conservancy, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the Natural Heritage Trust Fund, the Blue Ridge Rural Land Trust, the High County Conservancy and the National Committee for the New River.

"The acquisition of this property is an important benchmark in the expansion of Elk Knob State Natural Area and in the overall vision for conservation in the northwest Mountains," Susan Tillotson, superintendent of state parks, told the gathering.

"Over time, the people of North Carolina will even more fully appreciate the generosity of The Nature Conservancy and our other partners."

The acquisitions bring to more than 9,000 acres the



LONG HOPE CREEK IS ON CONSERVATION LAND BORDERING THE PEAK.

total of conservation lands in an amphibolite mountain range that arcs from just west of Boone toward Jefferson and Mount Jefferson State Natural Area. The range's high elevation and rich soils support an impressive array of rare species and the mountains' slopes form the watershed for the New River.

Long Hope Creek holds an Outstanding Resource Waters designation as well as a thriving population of native brook trout. The surrounding lands on the flanks of The Peak are home to the pygmy salamander and rare plants such as the federally endangered spreading avens, an herb.

"This is pretty precious and rare stuff even in North Carolina," said Bill Holman, executive director of the Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

Merrill Lynch, The Nature Conservancy's assistant director for protection, said that land conservancies and state

agencies have managed "to weave together a conservation blanket" in the mountain range that offers a habitat corridor within an area that's under extreme development pressure.

The new land acquisitions on The Peak are not yet contiguous to Elk Knob State Natural Area's principal holdings in Watauga County. About 1,200 contiguous acres there will be the primary access point for the public.

In July, the Parks and Recreation Authority set aside \$313,000 for development of interim facilities to include an entrance road and parking area, picnic grounds, a park office, maintenance compound and trail improvements to the summit.

Under the direction of Superintendent Larry Trivette, a citizens' park advisory committee will be appointed soon. And, the natural area will also adopt a formal master plan.

Tillotson said that Elk

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LUMBER RIVER DEDICATES NEW ACCESS

People in Scotland and Hoke counties love the Lumber River, and judging from a dedication event Oct. 22, they also love the new state park access area at Chalk Banks.

More than 200 local residents, accompanied by a marching band and a carload of hot dogs, turned out for the event staged by the Lumber River State Park Advisory Committee and the park's staff.

The Chalk Bank access area near the Town of Wagram in Scotland County officially opened its gates onto an expansive picnic grounds, canoe access, campsites, 40-space parking area and a maintenance compound.

Whit Gibson, chairman of the advisory committee, ceremoniously produced a \$9 check for the first night of camping.

"We recognize and appreciate that this river is a great natural resource right in our backyard," said Bobby Wright, chairman of the Hoke County Board of Commissioners. Visitors to the region, she said, "will be induced to learn the charms of the Lumber River and that will be a good thing."

State Sen. Bill Purcell told the crowd, "This is not only a great site for recreation, but will mean a significant economic impact for an area that's lagged behind."

The access was funded by a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund allocation of \$425,000, but nearly all of that paid for a 2.2-mile access road from US 401.

Park staff, under the direction of Superintendent James Sessoms and Ranger



SUSAN TILLOTSON, SUPERINTENDENT OF STATE PARKS, CUTS A RIBBON TO OPEN THE NEW CHALK BANKS ACCESS OF LUMBER RIVER STATE PARK.

Ron Anderson, cleared the land and built all of the amenities with the help of volunteers, other state agencies and local businesses.

The town is building more than two miles of water line to supply the new park access, and a local businessman has donated space for a temporary office in Wagram. Volunteer firefighters demolished a derelict structure on the property, and the Department of Corrections

provided inmate labor crews. A troop of local scouts has pledged to help build a group camping area.

Sessoms said the community has been anxious for the division to develop facilities at Chalk Banks ever since the 500-acre property was acquired in 1998. An attempt to establish a county park at the site faltered, and the property was acquired by The Nature Conservancy. The Lumber

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THE HOKE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL MARCHING BAND HELPED WITH THE CELEBRATION AT CHALK BANKS.



CUTTING A RIBBON AT THE REVAMPED THOM-A-LEX PARK ARE, FROM LEFT, STATE REP. HUGH HOLLIMAN, THOMASVILLE MAYOR JOE BENNETT, RON KINCAID OF THE N.C. PARKS AND RECREATION AUTHORITY, DON TRUETT, CHAIRMAN OF THE DAVIDSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, DAVIDSON COUNTY COMMISSIONER SAM WATFORD AND LEXINGTON MAYOR RICHARD THOMAS.

PARTNERS NET GRANT FOR PARK

When you go fishing for the big catch, it's good to have help.

That's what elected officials in Thomasville, Lexington and Davidson County believe after they combined forces to snare a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant to build recreation facilities on a "trophy bass" lake in that region.

The 2004 application from the Thom-a-Lex Recreation Authority resulted in a \$209,000 trust fund grant, matched by equal contributions from each government body.

"This is a partnership of people doing what people ought to do for citizens of their county and town," Ron Kincaid, a member of the Parks and Recreation Authority, said during a dedication ceremony

for the park in October.

The local recreation authority has been working since 1998 on ways to revitalize the recreational lake, which has no commercial development on its shoreline.

The trust fund grant helped provide for fishing piers, launch areas for small boats and canoes, a playground, accessible walkways and picnic pavilions. It also helps assure continued water quality in the lake, which serves as a drinking water source for both towns.

The lake holds an official "trophy bass lake" designation from the Wildlife Resources Commission due to its healthy population of six- and seven-pound largemouth bass. It's also being actively managed as a panfish fishery and offers abundant catfish.

ELK KNOB

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Knob State Natural Area has to be considered a very dynamic and organic project since more land acquisition opportunities are likely. There are also important land acquisition projects pending at nearby

Mount Jefferson and at New River State Park.

"We hope some of this news will serve as inspiration to our partners to continue these good working relationships at Elk Knob," she said.

CHALK BANKS

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River Conservancy and the Sandhills Area Land Trust are negotiating for more tracts in the area.

Chalk Banks is roughly 85 miles upstream from the Princess Anne Access, which had been the only developed portion of the 8,201-acre Lumber River State Park. It takes park rangers about 50 minutes to drive to the site from the park office. The park's master plan considers Chalk Banks as the "northern headquarters" of the park.

Public support for the park's development has been exceptionally strong, Sessoms said and he was not surprised at the strong turnout for the dedication.

Susan Tillotson, superintendent of state parks, told the crowd that they are to be congratulated.

"Like so many of our best state parks, Lumber River began as a local idea. It was born of persistence and commitment by people here who loved the river and wanted to see it preserved," she said.

"It will give Lumber River State Park much greater visibility, especially being so close to the more urban areas of Raeford and Fayetteville. It is another great opportunity to introduce folks in this region to the importance of continued conservation of the river and its eco-system."

DON'T FORGET...

THE STEWARD IS ALWAYS READY TO ACCEPT SUBMISSIONS; STORIES, PHOTOS OR STORY IDEAS ARE WELCOME!

accomplished with nothing, I don't know who it is. When he got to South Mountains, he just had a big ol' piece of land," said Tom Jackson, who succeeded Gravley in October as west district superintendent. "He always made something out of nothing, and when he finally got something, he made a whole bunch out of that."

By the time he left the job as park superintendent at South Mountains in 2001, it had become the largest state park with hundreds of thousands of visitors climbing those hundreds of steps to High Shoals Falls and strolling on one of the system's first fully accessible trails along one of the state's most pristine trout streams.

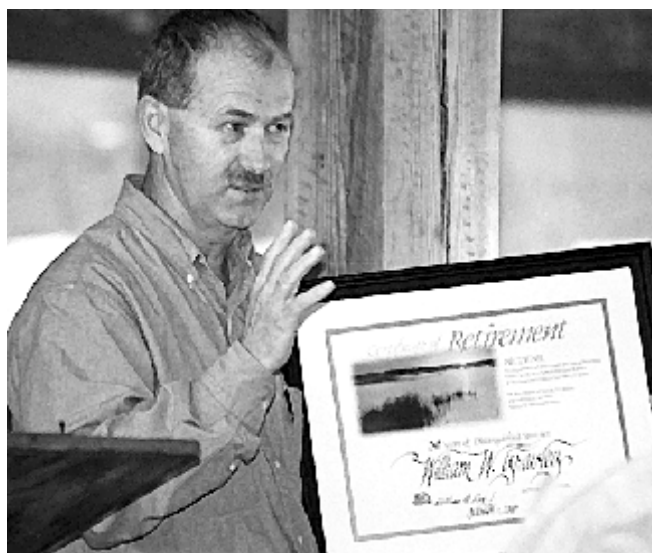
"I knew and felt early in life I wanted and was destined to play a role in protecting our Creator's handiwork. I realize my role has been small, but still a part of a divine plan," Gravley said.

Gravley retired Oct. 30 after a 29-year career with the Division of Parks and Recreation as a ranger, park superintendent and district superintendent.

He was honored by his colleagues and friends at a retirement banquet on Mount Mitchell. And, like most projects involving Gravley, the event reflected his hard work in the background.

Susan Tillotson, superintendent of state parks, said Gravley, "has always been true to the mission of this division, has always been true to himself and has always been a man of great integrity."

A native of Transylvania County, Gravley became intrigued as a boy with the possibility of being a park ranger. He earned a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology at North Carolina State



GRAVLEY'S RETIREMENT CAPPED A 29-YEAR CAREER. University, originally planning to join the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. But in 1975, he accepted a summer job as a naturalist at Pilot Mountain and Stone Mountain state parks.

In 1976, he went to Pilot Mountain as a Ranger I and eight years later, was named superintendent at South Mountains. He became west district superintendent following a 17-year tenure at that young park.

Aside from his professional duties, Gravley has always been involved in conservation causes. He has been an active member of Trout Unlimited, and he regularly offered guidance to the Foothills Conservancy and other conservation groups.

At his retirement event, Lewis Ledford, director of the division, told him, "Walt, we do appreciate all you've done in the area of conservation and community relations."

Tillotson said that as a superintendent and district superintendent, Gravley often volunteered for some tough assignments and was known throughout the state parks system for his dedication. He has a gift of knowing just what to say, Tillotson said, "to bring people back to recognizing we are all in this together."

Gravley told the crowd of colleagues, "I have never, nor will I ever, take for granted the elite opportunity I had to work and play in areas where time often stood still.

"Whatever I accomplished during my journey is not as important as the relationships I had with each of you...The mission is the same now as when I started in 1975. I leave the Division of Parks and Recreation with confidence you'll continue to carry forward with that mission."



DIVISION RETIREES AT THE MOUNT MITCHELL EVENT INCLUDED SCOTT DAUGHTRY, LEFT, FORMER DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT, AND TOMMY WAGONER, FORMER SUPERINTENDENT AT HANGING ROCK STATE PARK.

JACKSON TAKES WEST DISTRICT REINS

Tom Jackson, formerly chief park ranger, has been promoted to west district superintendent for the state parks system. He succeeds Walt Gravley who retired October 1 after a 29-year career with state parks.

As one of four district superintendents, Jackson will be responsible for resource management, environmental education programming, law enforcement, safety and facility maintenance for eight state parks in western North Carolina as well as a number of state natural areas including Elk Knob and Mount Jefferson.

"We are fortunate to have someone like Tom ready to step into this important position with his broad experience as a park superintendent and chief ranger," said Lewis Ledford, director of the division. "His knowledge will be valuable as our west district grows with a new park planned at Hickory Nut Gorge and new public



facilities coming on line at Gorges State Park and Elk Knob State Natural Area."

Jackson is a native of McDowell County and a 1984 graduate of Appalachian State University with a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management. While in college, he worked as a seasonal employee at New River State Park and, for the National Park Service, on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Jackson joined the division in 1985 as a Park Ranger I at Hanging Rock State Park. After a five-year tenure as a park ranger for Mecklenburg

County Parks and Recreation, he rejoined the staff at Hanging Rock in 1991 and was promoted to Park Ranger III in 1994 at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area. In 1995, He was promoted to Superintendent I at Falls Lake State Recreation area, and in 2000, became chief park ranger responsible for the division's public safety programs.

Jackson holds an advanced law enforcement certificate and is a certified environmental educator.

Jackson said, "The biggest attraction for me is the challenge of protecting the tremendous natural resources we have in western North Carolina. There are a lot of exciting opportunities for our parks system ahead and I look forward to working with the great staff we have in the west."

Jackson will be based in the division's western district office at Lake Norman State Park in Iredell County.

ELLIS IS RESOURCE SPECIALIST IN WEST

Marshall Ellis has been named resource management specialist for the state parks system's western region.

The Division of Parks and Recreation reorganized its resource management program, assigning biologists to three state regions. Previously, the program's two biologists had statewide duties and were based in Raleigh.

Resource management specialists are responsible for inventory of parks' biological resources and compliance with environmental regulations relating to capital projects. And, they address resource management issues such as

rare species protection, invasive and non-native species management and prescribed burn programs.

Ellis will be based in the division's western district office at Lake Norman State Park in Iredell County.

A veteran of the state parks system, Ellis has served as western district interpretive and education specialist since August 2003. He is a native of Greenville, NC and a graduate of R.J. Reynolds High School in Winston-Salem.

Ellis earned a bachelor's degree in biology in 1980 from Western Carolina University and a master's degree in biology

in 1993 from Idaho State University. He joined the division in 1992 as a resource management specialist with responsibilities across the state.

"Marshall is well regarded throughout the state parks system and, indeed, throughout the state for his broad knowledge of natural resources and his experience in dealing with issues facing plant and wildlife habitats," said Lewis Ledford, director of the division. "We're pleased to be able to expand our staff of specialists as one of our founding principles is to give the highest degree of protection to natural resources."

NC PARKS REACH OUT TO LOUISIANA

Randy Fernandez is a state park ranger who essentially lost his state park.

His duty station, the 358-acre St. Bernard State Park in St. Bernard parish, all but vanished during Hurricane Katrina. A 51-site campground, swimming pool, picnic grounds, trail system, most of the trees – and Fernandez' house – all disappeared.

Through an outreach program for Louisiana State Parks, the staff at Hanging Rock State Park found Fernandez and “adopted” him and another ranger, Charlie Lester at Sengette State Park, along with Lester's family.

Goose Creek State Park has adopted two Louisiana State Parks employees and Falls Lake State Recreation Area has adopted yet another. North Carolina rangers and staff are in the process of gathering home furnishings, clothes and cash for the displaced Louisiana employees.

“We're just trying to get some normalcy back into their lives,” said Erik Nygard, park superintendent at Hanging Rock. “For instance, this week we're sending a check to help with their Thanksgiving plans.”

On Nygard's first contact with Fernandez, who has an extended family of 14 in the area south of New Orleans, Nygard asked how he could help. “He hesitated and said he could use some socks. This man has lost all his belongings except for one week's worth of clothing and all he says he needs are a few pairs of socks. Randy is a proud man and reluctant to ask for help,” Nygard said.

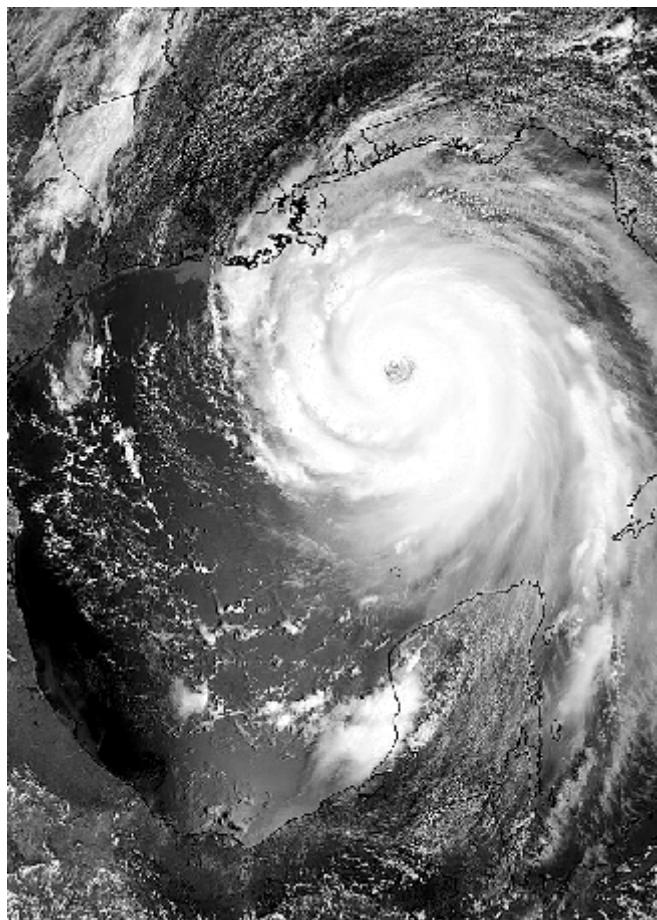
Fernandez' story is alarmingly typical of park rangers in the area. He was one of a very few who decided to stay in St. Bernard parish, where his family settled in its early history. The entire parish was virtually under water after the hurricane and flood, and 24,000 homes were destroyed.

Afterwards, the state park was barely distinguishable from the surrounding battered woodlands. It will have to be completely rebuilt, and it could be two years or more before recovery gets under way.

Fernandez has been temporarily stationed at Tickfaw State Park in a neighboring parish.

Other parks employees were scattered, and some resigned and have not returned. One Louisiana state park ranger has not been accounted for.

Lester at Segnette State Park has a home that survived, though it's been gutted. Since



NASA SATELLITE IMAGE OF HURRICANE KATRINA.

the storm, he, his wife and two children have been sleeping on air mattresses and sitting in lawn chairs. Segnette State Park sustained less severe damage and it may become a site for temporary post-hurricane housing.

Nygard said the Hanging Rock staff has sent several packages – one containing a new pair of boots for Fernandez – and raised more than \$2,500 in cash with the help of Pilot View Inc., a natural resources-oriented volunteer organization in Winston-Salem.

Kelley Thompson, superintendent at Goose Creek State Park said their “adoptees,” brothers Freddie and Melvin Miller, are living in visitor cabins at Bayou Signet State Park. The Goose Creek staff has raised more than \$1,000 in cash to help, but a more pressing need now is for home furnishings, kitchen goods and clothing.

Kelley said that she intends to drive a truck full of donated goods to Louisiana the first week of December.

Anyone wishing to provide a donation can call Falls Lake State Recreation Area, Hanging Rock State Park or Goose Creek State Park.

NEW JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM BEGINS

The first in a new series of junior ranger programs has been launched at Hammocks Beach State Park with the help of Friends of State Parks and Friends of Hammocks Beach and Bear Island.

The division is hopeful that the program can eventually be expanded to most of the state parks and recreation areas with the support of local park friends groups.

The core purpose of the junior ranger program is to introduce youngsters to the state parks in an informal way and to cultivate a sense of stewardship for natural and cultural resources.

In practice, the program uses a workbook with park-specific activities to be completed by a junior ranger candidate under the guidance of a parent or other adult. When the workbook is complete, the candidate is sworn in as a junior ranger and given a patch and certificate.

Marti Kane, the division's chief of interpretation and education programming, said the junior ranger program is a great way for parents and kids to connect to the natural environment together, with park staff in the wings if help is needed.

It's a good "first step" toward getting parents and children into the outdoors together, she said.

The activities include a simple stewardship project designed to move the child from simply learning about the environment to taking action. "Sometimes that gets the kids excited and suddenly they're willing to do more," Kane said.

A handful of state parks have had junior ranger programs for years. The current project is an attempt to standardize the programs to some degree and to broaden them.

The new learning materials and activities are geared for children ages 5-10.

Friends of State Parks adopted the project several months ago after receiving a grant from Great Outdoor Provision Co., an outdoors equipment retailer. Graphics freelancer Lea Beazley, a former division interpretation and education specialist, designed a template that standardizes the look of the workbook using the division's blue-and-green graphics treatment. But, the design also allows each park to develop text and photos specific to the park's interpretive themes and activities.

Each workbook is to contain:

- Information to help children understand the mission of the state



THE NEW JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM GRAPHICS PACKAGE INCLUDES A WORKBOOK, PATCH AND CERTIFICATE, ALL OF WHICH CARRY A PARK-SPECIFIC LOGO.

- parks system;
- Park safety messages;
- Activities and information on one or more of the park's primary interpretive themes;
- Information and/or activities that show how people have affected the environment in or surrounding the park;
- And, a stewardship project and the junior ranger pledge.

Each park can also place its specialized junior ranger logo on a standardized style of patch and certificate.

The materials for Hammocks Beach are the first completed. Those for Goose Creek State Park and Jordan Lake State Recreation Area are in the design stage.

The Friends of Hammocks Beach and Bear Island provided funding for printing the workbooks, patches and certificates.

One of the next challenges will be to secure funding for printing for junior ranger programs in other parks.

"Wouldn't it be great if all kids who wanted to be junior rangers could just spend one or two days in a concentrated effort to learn about a state park?" Kane said.

The division's Interpretation and Education Council is responsible for implementing the junior ranger program and for setting standards.

The parks are also being encouraged to develop supplemental programs and additional learning materials for older children.

North Carolina State Parks

Monthly Attendance Report, October 2005

PARK	OCTOBER 2005	TOTAL YTD. OCT. 2005	OCTOBER 2004	TOTAL YTD OCT. 2004	% CHANGE (2004/2005)	
					OCT.	YTD
Carolina Beach	20,602	215,883	17,988	202,145	15%	7%
Cliffs of the Neuse	6,324	84,582	8,698	113,357	-27%	-25%
Crowder's Mountain	31,188	294,273	37,175	317,629	-16%	-7%
Eno River	24,874	276,400	27,549	260,416	-10%	6%
Falls Lake	40,391	835,752	27,051	658,588	49%	27%
Fort Fisher	47,419	586,650	50,219	686,758	-6%	-15%
Fort Macon	83,070	1,103,206	95,834	1,202,970	-13%	-8%
Goose Creek	10,076	121,371	12,896	122,432	-22%	-1%
Gorges	5,796	103,851	13,120	123,326	-56%	-16%
Hammocks Beach	7,995	121,611	10,062	122,433	-21%	-1%
Hanging Rock	37,022	341,587	39,694	296,398	-7%	15%
Jockey's Ridge	53,058	891,922	54,080	819,969	-2%	9%
Jones Lake	4,243	70,648	8,186	91,142	-48%	-22%
Jordan Lake	57,618	1,407,763	81,142	895,934	-29%	57%
Kerr Lake	87,236	1,541,680	91,156	1,404,412	-4%	10%
Lake James	20,838	355,001	29,541	365,236	-29%	-3%
Lake Norman	30,570	419,664	34,527	399,804	-11%	5%
Lake Waccamaw	5,080	76,490	6,720	85,220	-24%	-10%
Lumber River	6,845	55,919	8,409	57,222	-19%	-2%
Medoc Mountain	5,076	42,732	8,380	51,800	-39%	-18%
Merchant's Millpond	16,824	195,136	20,088	175,312	-16%	11%
Morrow Mountain	16,280	183,400	16,560	240,620	-2%	-24%
Mount Jefferson	7,592	69,687	13,180	84,273	-42%	-17%
Mount Mitchell	45,149	218,243	55,158	416,049	-18%	-48%
New River	10,794	126,754	25,352	151,202	-57%	-16%
Occoneetchee Mountain	4,319	44,800	4,462	34,735	-3%	29%
Pettigrew	4,440	64,003	4,324	69,730	3%	-8%
Pilot Mountain	40,849	343,733	53,768	344,440	-24%	0%
Raven Rock	9,785	92,318	11,286	93,590	-13%	-1%
Singletary Lake	2,700	37,676	2,772	33,021	-3%	14%
South Mountains	15,560	170,622	0	49,194	0%	247%
Stone Mountain	37,816	334,876	42,824	384,680	-12%	-13%
Weymouth Woods	3,478	36,211	4,012	37,907	-13%	-4%
William B. Umstead	51,761	508,344	36,918	430,022	40%	18%
SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL	852,668	11,372,788	953,131	10,821,966	-11%	5%

Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation is:

to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;

to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina;

and

to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources

for all citizens and visitors of North Carolina.

SAFETY ZONE **Enjoy a safe holiday season**

✓Be smart at holiday celebrations; always use a designated driver.

✓Select safe, age-appropriate toys for children that are nontoxic, durable and free of small parts, projections and rough edges.

✓Prevent holiday fires; use nonflammable decorations and unplug lighting before leaving home or going to bed.



The Steward

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